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# STUDY PROJECT

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## RHEIN-MAIN AIR FORCE BASE: A STRATEGIC BASE THAT PROVIDED CONTINUOUS SUPPORT FOR DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM

BY

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Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were a great success because all services and the coalition worked together jointly to achieve victory. Many combat service support units worked day and night to contribute to this victory. Some were recognized and some were not. This is a story of how Rhein-Main Air Force Base and the 21st Replacement Battalion, both located in Frankfurt, Germany, supported the war effort. The period covered is from August 1990 through April 1991. The story describes Rhein-Main Air Force Base and the 21st Replacement Battalion's peacetime missions and how those missions expanded and surged to support Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Major support efforts covered are: Food Service Operations, Billeting Operations, Morale and Recreation, Aerial Port Operations, European Desert Express, Medical Support Operations, Political Demonstrations, Aeromedical Staging Facility, Patriot Missile Move, and Individual Ready Reserves. All of these support efforts were executed superbly because we all worked together jointly and were not concerned about which service was going to get the credit. The common thread throughout the story is doing whatever it takes to accomplish the mission, regardless of difficulty, and providing for our most precious resource, "the troops."

## **USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER**

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### **RHEIN-MAIN AIR FORCE BASE: A STRATEGIC BASE THAT PROVIDED CONTINUOUS SUPPORT FOR DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM**

INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Steve B. Strippoli  
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## INTRODUCTION

The opportunity to command a battalion in the United States Army is a privilege I will never forget. It requires the battalion commander to lead and care for America's sons and daughters. The commander's job, from the first day, is to prepare the unit for combat, and to prepare to lead that unit in combat, regardless of whether it is a combat arms, combat support, or combat service support unit. Every task, every activity occurring in the unit should orient on and contribute to the unit's Mission Essential Tasks List to support combat readiness.

This paper describes what Rhein-Main Air Force Base and the 21st Replacement Battalion did to support Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. It represents the personal assessment of the author who served as the Commander of the 21st Replacement Battalion from June 1990 through June 1992. The story presented here is based on memory, briefing slides, the author's personal experiences, and notes that cover the period August 1990 through April 1991.

Regarding lessons learned and recommendations for the future: all are the author's opinions and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Army personnel community or the senior leadership. Other officers and soldiers, including those who served in the unit, may have an entirely different view of the same event, and it may be as valid as the author's. This is just one soldier's story.

At the onset, I must say that this paper would not be

possible without the support and guidance of many individuals. Most important was my direct supervisor, the former Director of the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate, 1st Personnel Command, located in Schwetzingen, Germany. He was a boss who was always available for advice and guidance, and one who let me do my job as a battalion commander. Truly an officer who puts the "P" in personnel and one who really cares about soldiers, he was more concerned about being good than looking good, and for this I will always be grateful. His bottom line was always, "If it is in the best interest of the soldier, make it happen." This story is a reflection of his bottom line.

### ***RHEIN-MAIN AIR FORCE BASE***

Rhein-Main Air Force Base is the home of the 435th Tactical Airlift Wing which operates the busiest peacetime military aerial port in Europe. It also performs tactical missions and aeromedical evacuations. The base is located approximately six miles southwest of Frankfurt, Germany, in the State of Hessen, and shares runways with the busiest airport on the European continent, the Frankfurt am Main Flughafen.

The base has several peacetime missions: support of strategic airlift operations, intratheater tactical airlift operations, aeromedical evacuation missions and training, and operation and maintenance of the Air Force portion of the Defense Communications System in the central European region. For

strategic airlift aircraft based in the Continental United States, Rhein-Main Air Base is the primary entry and exit port for the movement of supplies and personnel into and out of the European theater. The strategic airflow that transits Rhein-Main consists mainly of C-141 and C-5 traffic but also includes a variety of other aircraft such as DC-10's, C-23, and commercial and cargo planes (mainly 747s and DC-10s) contracted by Military Airlift Command.

The tactical airlift missions support United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces stationed in or deployed to Europe, Africa, and Southwest Asia.

### ***21ST REPLACEMENT BATTALION***

The 21st Replacement Battalion, the Army's only active replacement battalion, is a tenant unit located on Rhein-Main Air Base directly across the street from the Aerial Port Squadron Terminal. It is the only Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) Personnel Replacement Battalion in the Army. Every year the battalion is responsible for training five to seven Continental United States Replacement Regulating Detachments in their wartime mission and doctrine.

The battalion also acts as USAREUR'S interim sponsor for all soldiers arriving in the European theater. This mission includes receiving and processing soldiers and family members who arrive at Frankfurt, Nuernberg, or Stuttgart, and transporting them to



over forty-four military communities in Germany and Italy. The forty-four communities are pre-drawdown numbers. Additionally, the battalion operates and manages a two million dollar a year bus transportation system that supports more than 120,000 soldiers and family members arriving in the European theater. Again, the 120,000 soldiers and family members are pre-drawdown numbers.

With these brief descriptions in mind, here is how Rhein-Main Air Base and the 21st Replacement Battalion worked together to support Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.

### OPERATION DESERT SHIELD

Less than two days after the President decided to send American troops to the Persian Gulf, United States war planes landed in Saudi Arabia to protect mideastern interests. The beginning of Operation Desert Shield. Virtually overnight the "Gateway to Europe", as Rhein-Main is known, also became the Gateway to the Middle East. Rhein-Main was involved in the air flow to the Middle East because the base had a total of three runways capable of supporting wide-body C-5 aircraft. Since the base is located halfway between CONUS and Southwest Asia (SWA) it was a good place to stop for fuel, maintenance, and crew rest.

The deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia began on 7 August 1990. As one of the five major European bases that supported Desert Shield, Rhein-Main suddenly experienced an

increase in aircraft and passenger activity. The role from the beginning was described by the Wing Commander, Colonel Thomas Mikolajcik as a "massive, extremely complex airlift operation spanning the globe and requiring coordination among all services and host countries in order to move millions of pounds of cargo and thousands of troops."

Rhein-Main became a critical staging base in support of a large strategic airflow. During the first thirty days of the operation, Rhein-Main averaged over one hundred aircraft movements a day, and seventy-five percent were in direct support of Desert Shield. From 8 August through 31 December, 1990, over 3,800 missions transited the base. In addition, over five hundred airmen and two hundred and sixty tons of equipment from Rhein-Main deployed to the Gulf.

### ***FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS***

While Desert Shield significantly stretched and taxed Rhein-Main's limited resources, the most monumental task was feeding soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines transiting Rhein-Main. A hot meal was often the first order of business since many troops arrived without a lot to eat, and some only received snacks on the aircraft.

The Air Force Commissary Service which is responsible for commissary personnel staffing immediately augmented their operation at Rhein-Main with personnel from other European

locations. To handle the troop surge, the Rhein-Main commissary and the Air Force and Army dining facility rations were increased immediately.

#### *In-Flight Kitchen*

The Air Force in-flight kitchen was responsible for preparing meals for passengers on all government aircraft that arrived at Rhein-Main. Since more government aircraft and passengers were arriving at Rhein-Main the in-flight kitchen became an extremely busy operation. During the month of August they served over 44,000 meals. From September through December, a total of over 100,000 meals were served. The most meals served in one 24 hour period was 2,922 on 28 December 1990.

#### *Zeppelin Inn Dining Facility*

The Air Force Dining Facility, called the Zeppelin Inn, was also busy. Before Desert Shield they served an average of about 886 meals per day. The August daily average was 858, actually lower than the regular statistics, which can be attributed to personnel receiving their ground meals from the flight kitchen. Also many of the Air Force meal card holders from Rhein-Main were deployed. The September daily average was 920 meals, October 968, November 1013, and December 1006. The 14th of December was their biggest day with 1,746 meals served.

#### *21st Replacement Battalion Dining Facility*

The Replacement Battalion Dining Facility normally supported between one hundred to three hundred soldiers per day. This population included permanent party personnel, transient troops,

and family members. Suddenly it supported the majority of flights that arrived at Rhein-Main, feeding arriving, departing, and transient (US to Saudi Arabia) soldiers. The facility was conveniently located across the street from the aerial port terminal. Because some of the deploying troops did not choose to eat on the aircraft or they only consumed a snack, the hot meal suddenly became a big morale booster. Since aircraft and troops were arriving day and night and the hot meal boosted morale, the dining facility began a 24-hour-a-day operation. Additionally, we fed Rhein-Main people, deploying troops, and USAREUR replacement soldiers. Even though the Dining Facility was small and capable of seating only 105 personnel at a time, we continued to make the best of the situation so all troops could eat a hot meal. The daily average for August was 1,163 meals, September 991, October 699, November 731, and December 829. The largest number of meals served in one day was on 11 August, 1,502.

In early January the troop surge began to increase significantly because more troops were required in the desert. Since more rations were required to support the troop flow, the dining facility ration truck immediately started to average between three to five trips a day to the warehouse compared to three trips per week before the war. The average daily meal consumption rate for the month of January was 1,128, in February 851, in March 587, and in April we were almost back to normal operations. On 20 January, the biggest day, the facility fed 2,393 meals. I was extremely proud of the dining facility

operations. Battalion soldiers fed in excess of 200,000 meals in support of Desert Shield/Storm. A significant milestone considering the limited seating capacity of the facility.

The facility was operated by Sergeant First Class Joslin Thomas, a super noncommissioned officer who always found a way to make it happen. His staff consisted of thirteen soldier cooks and ten wage grade civilian dining facility attendants. Once the facility was feeding three to four times normal capacity, the staff needed to be augmented with additional personnel. A temporary increase in cooks was authorized by the Deputy Director of the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate, 1st Personnel Command and the Civilian Personnel Office in Frankfurt authorized a temporary increase in kitchen attendants. All shared the same work ethic- countless overtime hours to ensure all troops received hot meals. They were all true professionals.

### ***BILLETING OPERATIONS***

In addition to feeding permanent party, transiting, and deploying troops, the battalion provided many other services to deploying personnel. As might be expected, these diverse missions were over and above the normal mission of processing USAREUR replacements. The battalion provided billeting until the replacement rooms were full, then set up 150 cots in our operations building so troops could relax for a few hours or overnight. Showers were provided. We issued supplies and

equipment to soldiers who departed their home stations without their proper issue. Since commanders needed to use secure phones, the battalion commander and the operations section provided the use of their secure phones on request. The battalion opened up its lounge, and the troops were able to use the mini-Base Exchange facility which had just opened and was suddenly operating 24 hours a day. These services all required considerable work and extra staffing, but the battalion soldiers worked together to make it happen.

#### *Normal Requirements*

Normally there are 834 bed spaces available on Rhein-Main Air Base in the base hotel and Temporary Lodging Quarters. In addition, there are 504 bed spaces in the 21st Replacement Battalion area which are normally reserved for replacement soldiers. However, when the battalion had vacancies, the beds were offered to help alleviate base overflow. But even with this amount of bed space, the leadership realized in early September that the base needed additional holding areas for passengers enroute to Desert Shield. The passenger flow was constantly increasing and transiting troops needed a place to relax away from the aircraft during refueling. To exacerbate the problem, we also needed billeting for all the augmentation support the base started to receive. We needed an area, close to the flight line, where troops could relax until their aircraft was ready to continue. Tent City was born.

### *Tent City*

In late August, the Commander of the Aerial Port Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Joe Bernardino, a friend and classmate from Command and General Staff College, approached me with an idea to build a rest area with tents next to the 21st Replacement Battalion's Dining Facility. This concept made sense because the dining facility was operating 24 hours a day and it was close to the flight line. Additionally, this area already had access to an electrical panel, water, and sewage lines. We briefed the wing commander during one of the crisis action briefings, and he made an on the spot decision to begin construction on Tent City.

The construction of Tent City was a joint effort from the very beginning. The Army and Air Force started work in late August, and at any one time 25 to 30 people were on site working, regardless of specialty. It must be noted early on that no service or individual was concerned about who was going to get credit. When services and individuals work together jointly to support the mission, anything can be accomplished in record time.

The Tent City project was a combined effort: electricians helped carpenters build hardbacked tents (tents with a hardwood frame and a hardwood floor), plumbers delivered material, environmental support people ran forklifts and front-end loaders. The flight kitchen and the 21st Replacement Battalion supplied hot and cold beverages, snack food items, and hot meals, day and night.

The first 32 tents consisted of 27 general purpose (GP)

medium tents and 5 GP large tents, all with electric lights. One GP medium tent served as a field chapel, one as a food warehouse next to the flight kitchen, and one as a camp administration tent with two phones, lighting, and electric wall outlets.

Tent City was basically self-contained, with all or most of the amenities of everyday life. Two of the medium tents were equipped to operate six washers and dryers. The washers and dryers operated continuously because many troops had to leave their luggage on the aircraft, and this area allowed them to at least wash and dry the uniforms on their backs before continuing their journey to the desert-- a significant morale booster. Four shower containers were contracted for hot showers. This area contained 31 showerheads and 22 sinks for male troops and 6 showerheads and 2 sinks for female troops. We also contracted 3 latrine containers to provide commodes, urinals, and sinks for the men and women. The Exchange and the Army and Air Force provided towels, soap, blankets, sleeping bags, cot pads, pillows and pillowcases. The United Services Organization and the Red Cross donated toiletries. Since Tent City was constructed on bare ground, the base engineers installed concrete runway slabs to function as sidewalks between tents. Otherwise, with winter rapidly approaching, the area would have turned into a mud pit.

#### *Additional Augmentation*

As of 2 November 1990 there were 800 cots in Tent City and billeting was still at a premium. A decision was made to relocate the base's NCO leadership school to Lindsay Air Station,



approximately 20 miles from Rhein-Main Air Base. The vacated NCO leadership school building provided an additional 54 bed spaces. Another decision was made to renegotiate a maintenance contract on two military family housing units located in Langen, a city close to Rhein-Main, until January 1991. Each family housing unit had 115 bed spaces. These two housing units provided 230 additional bed spaces to support base augmentees. Since air crews and TDY personnel required accommodations, all scheduled conferences on the base were cancelled, all hotel reservations were cancelled for Space "A" travellers, and all air crew members other than 1st pilots were required to double up in rooms. To fully understand the number of personnel who required billeting, it is necessary to list a few statistics. Once the Langen housing area was furnished and operational, its average occupancy rate was over 150 personnel in September, over 200 in October, and over 230 for November and December.

During this time the average daily occupancy rate on base increased significantly. Normal billeting bed space requirement was 214 per night. Occupancy rates for August increased to 680 per night, 772 in September, 742 in October, 737 in November, and 654 in December. We tried to find beds for Desert Shield travellers on base, but sometimes we had to put them in contract billets, or even non-contract billets. If they went to non-contract quarters they received a certificate of non-availability. From August through December the base issued over 450 certificates of non-availability. By comparison, before

Desert Shield, the base issued less than 10 certificates of non-availability per month.

As if there weren't enough problems, the contract cleaning team for the base hotel quit. Suddenly the base was in the housekeeping business: the beginning of Volant Sheet.

### *Volant Sheet*

Because of the large turnover of personnel on the base, hotel housekeeping suddenly became a 24 hour a day nightmare. The contractor quitting only exacerbated the situation. While the base tried unsuccessfully to recruit and negotiate new contracts for additional housekeeping personnel, the base requirements continued to increase, pushing us further behind. This time the spouses came through. They spearheaded an operation called Volant Sheet. Sixty-four volunteers ran Operation Volant Sheet from 13 through 19 August 1990. They worked from 1500 hours to 2400 hours cleaning rooms and changing linens so the incoming crews and personnel did not have to wait for a room. The spouses cleaned a total of 310 rooms and volunteered over 370 hours of their time. This short term but serious problem was resolved when we hired a new contractor who started work on 20 August.

## *MORALE AND RECREATION*

The base contracted for and erected a large German fest tent with a wooden floor, forced air heating, lights, and electric

outlets. It was erected in the center of tent city and served as a passenger holding area, accommodating up to 800 troops at one time, and as a recreation center. The tent was equipped with games, a library, televisions and VCRs, and movies. It was staffed entirely by volunteers. The fest tent was operational by the end of September 1990.

In October, the United Services Organization (USO) organized the Hanau, Frankfurt, Fulda, Darmstadt, and Rhein-Main military communities into volunteer work groups to staff the fest tent. The volunteers worked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, until February 1991, to provide snack items and recreation services for troops who visited the tent. The USO provided playing cards, board games, writing paper and envelopes. As mentioned earlier, the fest tent was equipped with several television sets, video recorders (AAFES provided VHS tapes for viewing), ping-pong tables, and darts. Outside activities included volleyball and horseshoes. The flight kitchen donated beverages and snacks, and AAFES provided vending machines and mobile snack trucks. Space heaters were installed and serviced 24 hours a day. AAFES donated a prefabricated building that was turned into an AT&T phone center. This was such a success that it eventually expanded to 106 phones.

### ***AERIAL PORT OPERATIONS***

While the base provided comforts for people and maintenance

for aircraft passing through from CONUS, the aerial port continued its normal mission to assist USAREUR replacement soldiers and other passengers, and process cargo.

The 21st Replacement Battalion played a major role in support of the aerial port. Once aircraft landed, the battalion assumed the mission of caring for all troops of all services, whether they were on the ground for a couple of hours or several days. As aircraft landed for refueling or maintenance, the battalion did whatever was required to support the troops.

The aerial port also had the responsibility for the Departure Airfield Control Group (DACG) deployment operations, because the Airlift Control Squadron deployed to the desert in early August 1990. The DACG was activated in early August, run by Army soldiers, and supported USAREUR Army units and soldiers deploying in support of Desert Shield. The USAREUR Army units deploying to SWA were generally units that did not have a mission to deploy to a different area of operation. Many were unfamiliar with air transportation requirements and some had never been airlifted before. Aerial port personnel assisted and taught several cargo preparation and load planning classes to prepare these units to be airlifted.

The DACG coordinated with the 322d Airlift Division in Ramstein for additional airlift, when required, and they provided personnel to support load planning and joint cargo inspections. Additionally, they were often asked by the aerial port to assist in cargo loading. The DACG personnel provided the deploying units

computerized programs and certification forms for hazardous cargo, which significantly reduced cargo preparation time. They also provided necessary equipment, such as pallets, net sets, and portable scales, and they developed a sequence of events to structure DACG operations to meet aircraft departure times.

The DACG was involved with deploying the 12th Aviation Brigade and the 45th Medical Company, the first two USAREUR units to deploy to SWA. In addition, early in Desert Shield the DACG deployed foreign military sales equipment including two M1A1 tanks and two Bradley armored fighting vehicles. But their largest involvement was when VII Corps deployed 72,000 soldiers to the desert, 32,000 soldiers deployed from the DACG and the remainder deployed from Stuttgart and Nuernberg.

The aerial port was an extremely busy place from August to December 1990. In addition to supporting their regular workload of port operations and the DACG, port personnel also supported 2,425 Desert Shield aircraft, 91,226 tons of cargo and 99,485 Desert Shield passengers. An incredible five month workload. At peak periods it was not uncommon for the port to process in excess of 1,800 passengers or receive, process, and load one million pounds of rations in a 24 hour period.

One area that required troops in the aerial port and those in transportation management to work many long, stressed hours was improperly marked cargo. Many unexpected, improperly marked pallets began arriving around 6 September. There were several problems with this type of cargo. It was generally not certified.

Overseas and CONUS destinations were on the same pallets. No military shipping labels were affixed to individual cargo boxes. Classified cargo was not identified and handled properly. Pallets were not covered properly. Pallets were not manifested in the aircraft, or all pallets were manifested for termination at Rhein-Main Air Force Base. Troops spent countless hours breaking down pallets, trying to identify shipment destinations, preparing new documentation, and reentering the cargo into the Defense Transportation System. Until this problem was rectified, troops worked 12 hour shifts, 7 days a week. The problem was finally corrected in CONUS at the shipment points of origin, but not until October 1990.

### ***EUROPEAN DESERT EXPRESS***

Since parts and equipment were not arriving in the desert in a timely manner, we needed a system that was capable of delivering critical items fast. European Desert Express was born. This was a new service initiated by Military Airlift Command to speed the delivery of critical spare parts and high priority cargo to units that deployed to the desert from Europe. A similar service called Desert Express already existed, originating from Charleston AFB, South Carolina, and providing an overnight service from CONUS to Desert Shield. Desert Express, which began in late October, was extremely successful and planners at Transportation Command realized that it could also be executed

from Europe. European Desert Express started on 7 December 1990, and operated daily from Rhein-Main. Mission essential parts were shipped from the deployed unit's home station to Rhein-Main by what ever means possible. Then they were loaded aboard a C-141, our dedicated European Desert Express aircraft. Each service was allocated a number of pallets on each flight, and it departed daily whether it contained a full load or not. Two other missions, which were spin offs from European Desert Express, were the daily Stars and Stripes and Mail Run II. These flights delivered the troops' mail and the daily USAREUR newspapers.

## **MEDICAL SUPPORT**

### ***AEROMEDICAL STAGING FACILITY (ASF)***

The Air Force Clinic at Rhein-Main was tasked to prepare to activate and operate an aeromedical staging facility (ASF) with 150 beds (this figure later became 250 beds) in support of theater aeromedical operations. The base received an ASF assemblage containing 250 beds from an Air Force Contingency Hospital in England. The concept was to be completed in four phases. Phase I consisted of having a "now capacity", utilizing clinic personnel and local assets. Phase II was to set up a site to accommodate a 250 bed ASF. Phase III consisted of being able to set up an operational 50 bed ASF within 24 hours. Phase IV was full implementation and activation of a 250 bed ASF.

Personnel from the Civil Engineers Squadron, the 21st Replacement Battalion, and the Clinic worked together to prepare

two aircraft hangers for the future ASF site. Once the site was completed, all the equipment necessary to make the site operational had to be installed.

The ASF was to serve only as a holding area for casualties arriving from the theater and awaiting reentry into the aerovac system. It was not designed nor meant to hold patients longer than six hours, but only to administer emergency treatment to stabilize patients until further transportation could be provided. A medical control center located in the ASF was responsible for coordinating patient movements with the local medical treatment facilities and the aeromedical control centers. By the end of 1990, the ASF was operational and served as a grim reminder to everyone stationed at Rhein-Main of the possible consequences if Saddam Hussein did not get out of Kuwait by the 15 January 1991 deadline.

#### *Return-to-Duty (RTD) Processing*

The battalion assumed the mission for return-to-duty (RTD) personnel. The replacement operations network serves as the conduit to bring all RTD soldiers under control and arranges their transportation to their units. These soldiers enter the replacement system at all levels and are returned to their original units unless emergency battlefield requirements dictate otherwise.

The RTD mission required the battalion to track all injured troops who returned from the Desert and were receiving treatment at a hospital in Germany. Once the troops were treated and



released, the battalion bus service transported the troops to the 21st Replacement Battalion. The 21st would check the doctors release form and schedule the troops for a flight to the states, return them to their USAREUR units, or return them to the desert. The battalion assisted all troops, regardless of services. This suddenly became a big responsibility because some troops did not want to return to the desert as the doctors recommended. The 21st controlled the troops and escorted them to the appropriate flight boarding areas.

Doctrine says that RTD troops will be equipped with MOPP gear, individual clothing and equipment, and weapons and ammunition on an as-needed basis. Reequipping is suppose to be done by a quartermaster reequipping platoon attached to direct support replacement companies. Reequipping was never accomplished at the 21st because we did not have the assets. Once again, the NCOs came through. A great Sergeant First Class by the name of Richard Burgess designed a computer program to track all hospital personnel. He assisted many troops with partial MOPP issue and uniforms through the Air Force. He set up and ran the entire program for the Army and because he did such an outstanding job, the other services requested his assistance. The RTD mission became a bigger task as more troops returned from the desert with injuries and illnesses.

On 11 January 1991, a United States Marine Corps liaison team from the Marine Fleet Force, Europe (Designee), stationed in the United Kingdom, arrived at the 21st. The team's primary

mission was to track Marine casualties from the war and set up a RTD cell to process Marine and Navy personnel. They were given work space in our replacement operations building and began work immediately. This liaison between the 21st and the Marine Corps provided valuable training to all branches of the military. After a couple weeks the team wanted to assist the battalion in the entire RTD operation for all troops regardless of service. Marines are a unique breed, but I can assure you they are extremely professional, and will do whatever it takes to complete a mission. I was proud to have them as a part of my battalion because they required little to no guidance. By the end of April 1991, the 21st and the Marine liaison team's extensive operation culminated with 509 Army, 47 Air Force, and 143 Marine/Navy personnel processed. All troops were Returned to Duty in SWA or returned to home stations in USAREUR or CONUS.

#### *Augmentee Processing*

During the period 18 through 26 December, the battalion assisted USAREUR'S 7th Medical Command by processing over 2,000 Reserve augmentees into USAREUR to support communities where medical personnel had deployed to the desert. Over seventeen units were processed into the theater day and night. The battalion also transported the soldiers to their gaining installations, using the USAREUR S-Bus system. This operation taxed the battalion, but again it was accomplished with team work and dedication.

### *Patient Locator Liaison*

In early January, the 1st Personnel Command attempted to establish a patient locator service to track casualties resulting from the anticipated war. The 21st Replacement Battalion received the mission to establish liaison teams, consisting of three to five soldiers, at the Frankfurt, Nuernberg, and Stuttgart international airports. The mission was to identify and assist family members of deployed service members with patient locator service and transportation information. We were to meet arrivals in the customs area, verify their identification, call the respective service's casualty locator cell to find out what hospital the casualty was in, and then assist family members with onward transportation.

### OPERATION DESERT STORM

January 1991 actually seemed like a continuation of 1990, except for a resolution passed by the Security Council on 29 November 1990, authorizing the use of force if Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991. This resolution set the two years worlds apart. 1991 would be remembered as the year the United States and its allies went to war against Iraq.

The entire world stood by and waited, as the deadline set by the Security Council rapidly approached. By midnight, 15 January

1991, Iraq had not made any attempts to withdraw from Kuwait. Forty-eight hours later, on 17 January, the war began.

The requirements for Rhein-Main Air Base did not stop, they increased. All of the base's planning and coordinating in anticipation of war paid off. The mission was not going to be any easier, but at least we were prepared for the long haul. The 43 day around-the-clock air war and the 100 hour ground war were over on 28 February 1991, the day the cease fire began. The cease fire day was the beginning of Desert Calm. Once the war was over, the focus shifted to troop redeployments. Redeployments started in early March of 1991. The mission at Rhein-Main remained the same. We provided the same services for the returning troops that we did for the ones who deployed. March and April were the busiest redeployment months since the start of Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

### ***POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS***

Shortly after the war began, Rhein-Main became the focal point for demonstrations by various anti-war groups. At times demonstrators deliberately blocked access to the main gate of the base in an attempt to hinder base operations. At times the autobahn in front of the main gate was completely inaccessible because of the large numbers of demonstrators. However, at no time were the demonstrators successful in halting base operations. The base leadership generally knew about most of the

demonstrations ahead of time since German law requires demonstrators to register before demonstrating or risk being arrested. We were supported in all instances by the German Police.

In addition to demonstrators, the base also had to deal with several terrorist group threats. Although the base did everything in its power to ensure the safety of the base and its personnel, security personnel could not be everywhere at all times. It was up to the entire base population to be extremely vigilant during this time. Family members had to be cautious, and as an added security measure some sponsors purchased handguns for their family members.

After several anti-Desert Storm demonstrations by various groups all over Germany, several hundred pro-Desert Storm citizens demonstrated in front of the United States Embassy in Frankfurt. Rhein-Main also received many letters and phone calls from the German community thanking the United States and its servicemen for being "their guardian angel" and defenders of freedom.

### ***AEROMEDICAL STAGING FACILITY OPERATIONS***

Although no one knew for sure what to expect after the deadline set by the security council had expired, the base leadership had to plan for the worst-- war. The ASF that was constructed became a fully functional facility on 19 January 1991

with a bed patient load of 150. On 30 January, it was functional with a 250 bed patient load. It must be noted that the facility was staffed by over 100 reservists who arrived on 18 January, and their number increased to roughly 150 by 28 January. Reserves and active duty troops worked together to make this facility a success.

Personnel at the ASF generally knew hours ahead of time when a mission from the desert would arrive. Through the use of radio patches on inbound aircraft, facility personnel were able to confirm priority and urgent patient status, as well as what kind of medical support would be required for the particular mission. Patients were assigned a bed on arrival and fed a hot meal. After the patients' conditions were further assessed, they were sent to the receiving hospitals by helicopter, ambulance, or ambulance bus.

From 20 January until the end of May, over 8,000 patients transited the ASF, including over 2,500 litter patients and over 5,400 ambulatory patients. Injuries ranged from broken bones to wounds. A total of 162 air missions transited Rhein-Main in support of patient movements.

The ASF mission was important because once the war started casualties were expected to be high. Fortunately, casualties never reached the predicted numbers. After the cease fire on 28 February 1991, and during the weeks that followed, the ASF mission started to wind down. By the beginning of May the ASF was reduced to a 50 bed facility and closed officially when the last

group of reservists departed on 29 May.

### ***PATRIOT MISSILE MOVE***

Two days after the start of the war Rhein-Main received a mission with the highest priority: the movement of Patriot Missiles to Israel. The mission objective was to protect Israel and keep them out of the war so the coalition would remain together. From 19 January through 22 January Rhein-Main was busy moving Patriot Missiles to Tel Aviv. The first aircraft departed at 0730 on 19 January in a snow storm and the last aircraft on 22 January at 0145. Army and Air Force personnel worked extremely well together to implement this national policy in such a short time frame. A total of 87 C-5 missions and 7 C-141 missions launched to support this major effort.

A second Patriot Missile move occurred on 25 January when Rhein-Main launched 15 C-5 missions to Tel Aviv in a 24 hour period. It must be emphasized that missions like this are not successful unless you have great leadership and outstanding troops who are willing to sacrifice. Every troop who participated in this mission is to be commended because it was executed flawlessly and in record time.

## ***INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVES (IRR'S)***

During the period 11 through 20 February 1991, the 21st Replacement Battalion, in coordination with 1st Personnel Command and V Corps, processed and assigned over 5,000 Individual Ready Reserve fillers to training sites and units throughout USAREUR in support of Desert Storm. Representatives from the 8th Infantry Division and the 3rd Armored Division worked closely with the 21st soldiers to accomplish this mission.

The IRR operation required coordination and team work. V Corps' 64th Replacement Regulating Detachment (RRD) from Frankfurt collocated with the 21st operations section at Rhein-Main. Once the IRR's arrived at the 21st from their CONUS replacement centers their orders were endorsed by the 64th RRD. Soldiers were then assigned and transported to a training site in either Wildflecken or Grafenwoehr to begin squad, crew, or platoon training. After two weeks of refresher training, the 64th RRD would publish orders assigning the soldiers to the desert. The soldiers would return to Rhein-Main and depart on the next available flight. However, because the war ended so quickly, the IRR's never deployed to the desert. Many returned to Rhein-Main only to board an aircraft enroute to CONUS. The IRR's would have been a great combat multiplier in the desert, but their services were never required.



## CONCLUSION

It is always easy to find negatives, even after an outstanding performance. One can always think of things to have done differently, and it is always easier to criticize others, whether seniors or subordinates. The fact remains, the Army performed magnificently in support of Desert Shield/Storm and every soldier everywhere shares the credit. It was a first class, team effort.

The collective efforts of all Rhein-Main assigned and attached units played a direct and vital role in the multi-national operation to liberate Kuwait. General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summed it up in a letter to the base leadership, where he said, "Incredible! I had to write to you immediately to tell you and, through you, your entire team and community of my enormous pride and thanks for such a superb performance. You folks are great!"

It has not been the author's intent to present an exhaustive review of the 21st Replacement Battalion and Rhein-Main Air Force Base during his tenure of command or to address in detail every additional mission the battalion performed. Rather, it has been to tell part of the story from one perspective, focusing on the aspects of jointness.

From wherever one stands, command of a combat service support battalion during a conflict such as Desert Shield/Storm is demanding as no other. The demands on the physical, mental and

emotional capacities of leaders, soldiers, and families are immense and profound. The impact of the experience is long lasting, as evidenced by those who served before us. For a soldier, the memory that he or she contributed and gave his or her best provides considerable satisfaction.

There can be no argument that the Army's combat service support branches did their best to support the operations the best way they knew how, by making things happen when duty called. There is no doubt that soldier training and, above all, caring paid big dividends. The Army system of schools must survive to continue to produce the best leaders and followers. When soldiers are trained well they win!

The Army must make every effort to preserve and expand opportunities for its leaders to learn the profession of arms, and most importantly, to learn how to support great soldiers. It is criminal to have inexperienced soldiers teaching others.

Replacement operations worked well during Operations Desert Shield/Storm. The portion of operations that deals with RTD personnel requires work from the ground up beginning with doctrine. The medical community must maintain liaison with replacement operations once the soldiers are released for duty. Medical personnel never maintained liaison on a regular basis and when they did, information was not timely. When we fail to maintain liaison, we lose accountability and some soldiers are never returned to the replacement system. Our doctrine must be clear in this critical area. The RTD mission worked well not

because doctrine, policy, and procedures are in place but because great troops used a lot of common sense to make it happen. Also, as time went by we all understood the importance of this critical mission.

The 21st Replacement Battalion and Rhein-Main Air Base worked together and met all the demanding challenges of both Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm the only way it knew how-- with professional troops committed to excellence through quality service.

Rhein-Main is a strategic base that should continue in operation as long as the U.S. has forces in Europe. As the transportation hub for Europe, no other European base could have duplicated its support and services during the war. Even though the war is over, the U.S. must still protect its interests in the Middle East. Rhein-Main is strategically located and prepared to support U.S. interests in any regional conflict that may unfold in the near future.

Lastly, the author will always cherish his days of command at Rhein-Main, recognizing the privilege it was to lead great soldiers in a great cause. I will never forget the hard work, sweat, and dedication each and every soldier in the battalion put forth to make everything happen all the time. Victory has a superb flavor all of its own, and all American troops serving at Rhein-Main Air Base should be proud of all the support and sacrifices they made in liberating Kuwait.